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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND NEA/IPA FOR
WILLIAMS/SHAMPAINE/BELGRADE; NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/WATERS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [PGOV](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: CODEL WOLF MEETS WITH PA MINISTERS OF TOURISM AND
PUBLIC WORKS

Classified By: Consul General Jacob Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: During a meeting on April 3, PA Minister of Tourism Dr. Khulud Dabis (independent, nominated by Fatah) told Congressmen Wolf, Pitts, Aderholt and Smith that the national unity government (NUG) needs the support of the U.S, Israel and the international community to strengthen moderate Palestinian voices and weaken the voices of radicals, such as Hamas. Dabis commented on the new cabinet's make-up, describing the new ministers as more open-minded and moderate than the previous cabinet. Separately, the CODEL met with a group of prominent Palestinians that included the unplanned participation of PA Minister of Public Works and Housing Samih Abid (Fatah). End Summary.

¶2. (C) On April 3, Congressman Frank Wolf (R-VA), Congressman Joe Pitts (R-PA), Congressman Robert Aderholt (R-AL), Congressman Chris Smith (R-NJ) and staff met with PA Minister of Tourism Khulud Dabis and PA Minister of Public Works and Housing Samih Abid in separate meetings. DPO also participated in the meeting with the Minister of Tourism.

NUG SEEKS SUPPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

¶3. (C) In a Bethlehem meeting, Minister of Tourism Khulud Dabis said the NUG is the only hope to lift the PA out of crisis. Dabis views the NUG as an alternative to the Hamas government and a "rethinking of how to represent different political parties and technocrats within one government." She said the NUG is committed to non-violence and believes negotiation is the only path to peace. Cabinet members, she said, are striving for a common language and are determined to respect one another. Dabis described the new ministers as more open-minded and moderate than the previous cabinet.

¶4. (C) Referring to the Hamas win in last year's PLC elections, Dabis commented that the Palestinians "cannot afford another failure." After dealing with Hamas for a year, Palestinians recognized they must move forward and form a NUG. Dabis encouraged the U.S., Israel and the international community to accept the NUG as a sign of support for moderate voices within the PA. "Whatever happens," she said, "we are ready to talk to the international community." While stating that there is consensus within the cabinet that the requirements of the international community must be met, Dabis also expressed doubt about how long such a consensus will last. Urging the international community to reach out to the NUG, Dabis said, "We have to deal with the results of the elections but we cannot use the results as collective punishment for the Palestinian people." She stated that the patience of Palestinians will not last long, particularly for those who

encounter settlements, the separation barrier and restriction of movement on a daily basis. Without support from the international community for moderate voices within the PA, Dabis fears that radical voices, like Hamas, will be strengthened.

PROSPECTS FOR INCREASED TOURISM DIM

15. (C) Expressing muted optimism on prospects for tourism in the near future, Dabis stated that the West Bank has suffered from a tourism deficit in recent years. Despite the increase in tourism between 1994 and 2000, tourism declined drastically in 2001 due to the second intifada. The current occupancy rate of hotels in Bethlehem is 5-10%. Unlike the nineties when large numbers of pilgrims flocked to Bethlehem during Holy Week, Dabis expects only approximately one thousand tourists and Christian pilgrims to enter Bethlehem each day this week after Palm Sunday. She added that factors negatively affecting tourism include Israeli checkpoints and the U.S Travel Warning. As Minister, Dabis hopes to use tourism as "a machine for economic development" and to open to the West Bank to tourists of all religions.

MEETING WITH MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AND PLANNING

16. (C) During an April 3 roundtable in Ramallah, the CODEL met with several prominent Palestinians, including Zahi Khoury, Chairman of the National Beverage Co; Dr. Nabil Qassis, President of Birzeit University; Hanan Ashrawi, Third Way Party PLC member; Ghassan Khatib, former Minister of Planning; Mamdouh al-Aker, Commissioner General of the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizen's Rights (PICCR); and Samih Abid, PA Minister of Public Works and

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Housing. Khoury organized the meeting at the request of the CODEL and included Abid at the last minute without consulting the Consulate. During the meeting, the Palestinians discussed prospects for peace in the near future and proposed the U.S. send a senior envoy to the region to broker peace. Minister of Public Works Samih Abid did not contribute significantly to the dialogue.

BIO ON PA MINISTER OF TOURISM KHULUD DABIS

17. (SBU) Dr. Khulud Dabis was born in 1965 in Bethlehem from a Christian family near the village of al-Zababdah. She holds a PhD from Hannover University in Germany where she studied conservation architecture. Dabis worked for the PA as director of Bethlehem's 2000 Heritage Preservation Center project. She is PA Minister of Tourism and also works as coordinator for several EU-funded Palestinian heritage projects. Dabis is married to Sulaiman Abu Dayya, a Christian from Jerusalem, who works as a project coordinator for the German Naumann Foundation. She has three children. Dabis is a Jerusalem ID holder who maintains residences in both Jerusalem and Beit Jala.

18. (C) Bio Note: Dabis left Germany upon completion of her PhD and returned to the West Bank in order to use her professional degree to contribute to the process of Palestinian state-building. For over a decade, she worked in cultural heritage preservation, focusing on Bethlehem. She said her position in the PA Cabinet will encourage broader involvement of Palestinian women at all levels of government.

BIO ON PA MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AND HOUSING SAMIH ABID

19. (SBU) Samih Abid, now Minister of Public Works and Housing, served as Deputy Minister of Planning in the government headed by Ahmad Quraya' (Abu Ala'a). He was a

member of the Palestinian negotiating team with Israel during the period that included Camp David and Taba in 2000. He is also affiliated with the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research. He holds a PhD in Planning.

¶10. (U) CODEL Wolf did not have the opportunity to clear this cable.

WALLES